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STELLAR TAP MADE 3-1 FAVORITE FOR SATURDAY'S IROQUOIS STAKES TO KICK OFF 'ROAD TO KENTUCKY DERBY'

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Thursday, Sept. 16, 2021) – L and N Racing and Winchell Thoroughbreds' 5 1/4-length debut winner Stellar Tap was installed as the 3-1 morning line favorite in a field of 11 2-year-olds that entered Saturday's \$300,000 Iroquois Stakes (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

The 1 1/16-mile Iroquois is one of five stakes events on the first Saturday of the 12-day September Meet. The Top 4 finishers of the race will receive 10-4-2-1 points as part of the 21-race "Prep Season" on the "Road to the Kentucky Derby presented by Woodford Reserve" that showcases foundation-building races in advance of the "Championship Series," which begins in mid-February.

The Iroquois, and its counterpart, the \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII) for 2-year-old fillies, are both part of the Breeders' Cup "Win and You're In" series and will offer an automatic entry-fee paid berth to the season-ending championships held on Nov. 5 at Del Mar.

The Iroquois was carded as Race 9 with a post time of 10:11 p.m. The first of 11 races will begin at 6 p.m. The other stakes events on the evening's program are the Pocahontas, \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII), \$300,000 Open Mind and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

Trained by Hall of Famer **Steve Asmussen**, Stellar Tap arrived to Churchill Downs on Tuesday from Saratoga. In his debut victory on Aug. 7, the son of Tapit gave Asmussen his North American record-breaking 9,446th career win. **Ricardo Santana Jr.** will have the return mount from post 6.

The second choice on veteran oddsmaker **Mike Battaglia's** morning line is fellow Saratoga maiden breaker **Major General**. Owned by **WinStar Farm** and **Siena Farm** and trained by **Todd Pletcher**, Major General is scheduled to arrive from New York to Churchill Downs on Friday.

The complete field for the Iroquois from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Tough to Tame** (Sophie Doyle, Chris Davis, 20-1); **Lucky Boss** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 10-1); **Roger McQueen** (Adam Beschizza, Larry Rivelli, 10-1); **Strike Hard** (Leonel Reyes, Matthew Williams, 10-1); **Magnolia Midnight** (Corey Lanerie, Dallas Stewart, 12-1); Stellar Tap (Santana, Asmussen, 3-1); **Red Knobs** (James Graham, Dale Romans, 20-1); Major General (Javier Castellano, Pletcher, 4-1); **Guntown** (Tyler Gaffalione, Asmussen, 9-2); **Husband Material** (Florent Geroux, Jimmy Toner, 15-1); and **Bourbon Heist** (Joe Talamo, Ian Wilkes, 9-2).

In Saturday's Pocahontas, trainer **Norm Casse** hopes a return to Churchill Downs will prove the winning formula for his impressive debut winner Ontheonesandtwos, who is slated as the 5-2 morning line choice.

"We're really pleased with the way she came back out of the Adirondack at Saratoga," Casse said. "I think the track that day was pretty speed favoring and she made her run on the far turn but couldn't catch the leaders. We got her back to Churchill Downs where we know she loves this track and has some race experience beneath her."

Among Ontheonesandtwos main competition in the Pocahontas is **Hidden Brook Farm** and **Black Type Thoroughbred's** flashy Colonial Downs debut winner **Hidden Connection**. Trained by **Bret Calhoun**, Hidden Connection ran a swift 88 Brisnet speed figure in her 7 1/2-length maiden win.

"She was really impressive that day when she broke her maiden," Calhoun said. "She's only had this one race under her belt so it's a test going two-turns. The way she ran last time gives us confidence in her."

Hidden Connection will be ridden by **Reylu Gutierrez**, who plans to ride the entirety of the September Meet at Churchill Downs. Gutierrez was based at Colonial Downs this summer and rode Hidden Connection to her victory.

"She acts like she'll handle the extra distance just fine," Gutierrez said. "I really like the post we drew (No. 9) and think she's ready for this test."

The complete field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer, morning line odds): **Code for Success** (Rafael Bejarano, Vicki Oliver, 20-1); **Goddess of Fire** (Javier Castellano, Todd Pletcher, 6-1); **Mama Rina** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 12-1); Ontheonesandtwos (Santana, Norm Casse, 5-2); **Majestic d'Oro** (Martin Garcia, Brendan Walsh, 8-1); **Kneeships** (James Graham, Tom Amoss, 8-1); **Miss Chamita** (Gregory Romero, Michel Doualhy, 30-1); Hidden Connection (Gutierrez, Calhoun, 9-2); **Lemieux** (Tyler Gaffalione, Mark Casse, 10-1); and **Joyrunner** (Joe Ramos, Laura Wohlers, 10-1).

SHEDARESTHEDEVIL RETURNS TO CHURCHILL DOWNS AS 4-5 FAVORITE IN \$400,000 LOCUST GROVE – It is a busy two weeks for trainer **Brad Cox**, who continues to scour the sales grounds at Keeneland as part of their 2021 September Yearling Sale. On Saturday, just 75 miles to the west, his star filly **Shedaresthedevil** will attempt her ninth-career win as the heavy 4-5 favorite in the \$400,000 Locust Grove (Grade III) at Churchill Downs.

Shedaresthedevil drew post No. 9 for the 1 1/16-mile race in an attempt to win her fifth race beneath the Twin Spires.

“She loves this track here at Churchill Downs as we know from her past races,” jockey **Florent Geroux** said. “I worked her a couple times at Ellis this summer and she’s doing great and really maturing as a 4-year-old. She looks fantastic coming into this race.”

Shedaresthedevil arrived Tuesday afternoon following a two-hour van ride from the Henderson, Ky. track. The multiple Grade I winner by Daredevil has banked \$2,047,318 in her career which began more than two years ago at Churchill Downs.

The field for the Locust Grove from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Crystal Ball** (Tyler Gaffalione, Rodolphe Brisset, 8-1); **High Regard** (Rafael Bejarano, Vicki Oliver, 30-1); **Lady Kate** (Adam Beschizza, Eddie Kenneally, 15-1); **Matera** (Ricardo Santana Jr. Cox, 12-1); **Envoutante** (Brian Hernandez Jr., Kenny McPeck, 2-1); **Our Super Freak** (David Cohen, Cherie DeVaux, 8-1); and Shedaresthedevil (Geroux, Cox, 4-5).

Run at 1 1/16-miles, the Locust Grove could be used to launch fillies and mares to a spot in the starting gate for the \$2 million Longines Distaff (GI) on Nov. 6 at Del Mar. The Locust Grove is carded as Race 10 with a post time of 10:42 p.m. First post is 6 p.m. The race shares the Saturday night spotlight with the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$300,000 Open Mind and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

FOLEY EXUDING CONFIDENCE IN BANGO AHEAD OF SATURDAY’S \$275,000 LOUISVILLE THOROUGHBRED SOCIETY – **Tamaroak Partner**’s homebred sprinter **Bango** will attempt to extend his win total at Churchill Downs to seven as the 2-1 morning line favorite in Saturday’s \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

“I think it’s going to take a darn good horse to beat him Saturday,” trainer **Greg Foley** said. “He loves Churchill Downs, as do we, and the six-furlong distance suits him perfectly. We had an idea after the Kelly’s Landing in the spring that this race could happen in September and it fits perfectly.”

Bango has recorded six victories beneath the historic Twin Spires and enters Saturday’s affair on a three-race win streak.

“It sounds cliché but I just think he’s getting better all the time,” Foley continued. “He looks like a million bucks around the barn, dapples all over his body, the whole deal.”

The Louisville Thoroughbred Society, named for the downtown Louisville-based club that opened its doors in March, was carded as Race 7 at 9:05 p.m. The first of 11 races will begin at 6 p.m. The night program, dubbed as Downs After Dark presented by Budweiser, also features the \$300,000 Iroquois (GIII), \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII) and the \$300,000 Open Mind.

The full field for the Louisville Thoroughbred Society from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Dennis’ Moment** (Corey Lanerie, Dale Romans, 6-1); **Endorsed** (Julien Leparoux, Mike Maker, 6-1); **Just Might** (Rafael Bejarano, Michelle Lovell, 5-2); **Derby Date** (Adam Beschizza, Jack Siston, 6-1); **Bango** (Gaffalione, Foley, 2-1); and **Mighty Mischief** (Ricardo Santana Jr., Steve Asmussen, 3-1).

PESSIN KEEPS BELL’S THE ONE AT CHURCHILL FOR FINAL BREEDERS’ CUP PREP IN \$300,000 OPEN MIND – Trainer **Neil Pessin** originally considered pointing **Lothenbach Stable**’s nine-time winner **Bell’s the One** to the \$250,000 Thoroughbred Club of America Stakes (Grade II) at Keeneland but has opted to keep the daughter of Majesticperfection at Churchill Downs for Saturday’s \$300,000 Open Mind (Listed) where she was made the 7-5 morning line favorite.

The six-furlong Open Mind drew a compact field of five fillies and mares including one of Bell’s the One top rivals for the upcoming Breeders’ Cup Filly & Mare Sprint (GI), **Sconsin**. Bell’s the One enters the Open Mind following a victory in the \$200,000 Honorable Miss Handicap (GII) at Saratoga.

“We’re very proud how she ran at Saratoga,” Pessin said. “She never really seems to get the accolades she deserves. She’s 9-for-19 lifetime and tries so hard every time she runs. The spacing with Saturday’s race seems to work better for her than running at Keeneland. This will give us an extra two weeks before the Breeders’ Cup.”

Corey Lanerie will ride Bell’s the One who drew the outside post No. 5.

“She’s a filly that does her best running outside of horses,” Pessin said.

Saturday’s Open Mind was carded as Race 3 of 11 with a post time of 6:56 p.m. It is the first of five stakes events on the card and shares the spotlight with the \$300,000 Iroquois (Grade III), \$300,000 Pocahontas (GIII), \$400,000 Locust Grove (GIII) and \$275,000 Louisville Thoroughbred Society.

The complete field from the rail out (with jockey, trainer and morning line odds): **Mundaye Call** (Florent Geroux, Brad Cox, 7-2); **Sconsin** (Tyler Gaffalione, Greg Foley, 8-5); **Ain’t No Elmers** (Adam Beschizza, Bret Calhoun, 4-1); **Jungle Juice (IRE)** (Alex Achard, Anna Meah, 20-1); and Bell’s the One (Lanerie, Pessin, 7-5).

DOWNS AFTER DARK, LOUISVILLE LIVE SATURDAY NIGHT – The lone **Downs After Dark** presented by Budweiser on Saturday, Sept. 18 will bring together two Louisville sports legacies under the famed Twin Spires.

Thoroughbred Racing will meet Louisville Cardinals Basketball when **Louisville Live**, the **University of Louisville's** annual preseason basketball event, comes to Churchill Downs for Downs After Dark.

To celebrate the theme of “**Horses & Hoops**,” fans are encouraged to wear Cardinals gear to this one-of-a-kind experience. Gates will open at 5 p.m. and the first race is 6 p.m. The spacious 30,000-square-foot Plaza adjacent to the saddling paddock will showcase pulsating live entertainment featuring the Cardinals’ men’s and women’s basketball teams on a portable court. The entertainment line-up will include official DJ for the Louisville Cardinals, **DJ K-Dogg**, who will spin game-time favorites from the Plaza stage.

UofL’s 1986 NCAA Championship men’s basketball team, guided by then future Hall of Fame Coach **Denny Crum**, will participate in the festivities and will be available to sign autographs prior to the Louisville Live main feature at 7:15 p.m.

Two specialty cocktails will be sold at the Old Forester Paddock Bar and the Spend a Buck Bar on the second floor of the Clubhouse in the Food Court: “The Cardinal Crush” and “The Slam Dunk.”

General admission to Downs After Dark is \$12 and includes an official program. Guests under the age of 18 will only be admitted to the track if accompanied by a parent or adult guardian. Limited premium dining packages are available starting at \$76 per person. Outdoor-third floor box seats are on sale for \$27 per person. Reserved seating can be purchased online at www.ChurchillDowns.com/Tickets.

SEPTEMBER MEET TV SCHEDULE – The racing action from Churchill Downs throughout the September Meet will be broadcast on FOX Sports’ “**America’s Day at the Races**,” which will air every race day on either **FS2** or **FS1**. Produced by the New York Racing Association, Inc. (NYRA) in partnership with FOX Sports, “America’s Day at the Races” is the acclaimed national telecast presenting coverage and analysis of the best racing from around the country.

DOWN THE STRETCH – Opening Day of the 12-day September Meet had a first post of 5 p.m. Thursday for the first of three Twilight Thursday events. The Plaza Stage entertainment was **Carly Johnson** with local food truck fare and \$1 Blue Moon and select domestic beer. ... “**Inside Churchill Downs**” will return to the airwaves Friday, Sept. 24 at 6 p.m. on ESPN 680/105.7. ... Family Adventure Day is Sunday, Sept. 26 with activities throughout the Plaza area for children age 3 and up. Tickets are \$10 in advance online at www.churchilldowns.com. ... Locally-based jockeys **Declan Cannon** and **Gabriel Saez** will be sidelined several months with injuries. Cannon had surgery Wednesday for a back injury and Saez has a leg injury. ... “**Churchill Downs Today**” will be streamed one-hour before each race day on Churchill Downs’ Twitter and YouTube accounts. Fans can watch all of the races and bet on www.TwinSpires.com, the official wagering provider of Churchill Downs Incorporated.

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